





# Historic Barrington

Incorporated just 30 years ago, the Village of Deer Park, like the entire Barrington area, owes its roots to mid 19th century settlers. First inhabited by Pottawatomie, Macoutin and Winnebago Indians, the area drew pioneers from Vermont and Massachusetts in the early 1830s. They settled “Deer Grove” around what is now Lake-Cook and Quentin Roads. An historic family farmstead, the 14-acre Vehe Farm, has been preserved for open space, education and use as a community center within the Village with support of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

Barrington owes its name and beginnings to Troy, New York; Great Barrington, Massachusetts; and locales in Vermont from which settlers came via Fort Dearborn, later established as Chicago. First settled as Miller Grove, and then as Barrington Center, the area was home to farmers and, in 1840 its first school house: the Northway School. Ten years later it was officially established as Barrington Township, and in 1854 80 acres were included in a village plan known as Barrington Station. Railroad officials were persuaded by residents to relocate the train station planned for Deer Grove up track to Barrington Station, which quickly saw construction of a lumber mill, then a growth spurt of log homes. The Village of Barrington received its charter in 1865.

The mid to late 19th century saw homes spring up in the area that 100 years later would become incorporated as North Barrington-in 1959. The Village encompasses a landmark residence known as The Kimberly House, claimed to have been occasioned by President Theodore Roosevelt on visits to a relation. Also incorporated in 1959 were the villages of South Barrington and Lake Barrington. South Barrington boasts an area rich in historical character and volunteerism. The Village is home to the often-visited Millrose Country Store-envisioned by William R. Rose of the Rose Packing Company-that houses six 125-year-old barns with a microbrewery and restaurant. The beginnings of Lake Barrington lie in the 1833 homestead of Joseph Flint and his son Amos (for whom Flint Creek was named) and 90 years later in the development of the 600-acre Criswell family estate that eventually would spawn Lake Barrington Shores.





West of Barrington was hilly farmland and a town once known as Middlebury that together would become the Village of Barrington Hills by the end of 1962. Rural life, a love of open space and wildlife, and a social populace that gathered first at the Barrington Country Club and then the Biltmore Country Club, all characterize the area.

Davlin's Corners—so called for 1830s settler Hugh Davlin, where trails first intersected at what is now Barrington Road and Indian Trail Road—was home to the one-room Davlin School in the mid-1800s. A century later the crossing would belong in the Village of Tower Lakes, finally incorporated in 1966. The village draws its name from a steel observation tower overlooking the lake created during the 1920s with dams built between hills along the Mud Creek that spanned three local farms.

### ***Preserving the Past, Today***

Today's caretakers of local history have an inspiring assemblage of historic places to showcase, chronicle and preserve the past. The Barrington Area Historical Society is headquartered on a site featuring two restored folk Victorian houses on Main Street, including a shop and one-room schoolhouse. Just behind the homes is the impressive Old Barrington Center with state-of-the-art exhibit space, lobby and an ingenious restoration encompassing two historic blacksmith shops: the last authentic, 1929 Wichman shop in the village that was moved to the site from Cook Street in 1999, and the Creet carriage barn dating to the first, 1853 Barrington area shop. The forge in the Old Barrington Center offers demonstrations by a working blacksmith every Saturday. Volunteers hope to enhance the streetscape to the east with an addition: "We'd like to put up a visitor's center—a replica of Jewel Tea's first store in downtown Chicago," said Michael Harkins, current Society president. "We hold the collection of artifacts of the Jewel Tea Historical Foundation," he explained.

For now, members of the Society are pleased to be able to offer unprecedented local access to national exhibits in

addition to its own collection. "When we moved here we had the four walls and a roof," Harkins said of the Old Center shell, "and we created and constructed archival collection storage with state of the art environmental and humidity controls," he said. We put in museum quality lighting, heat and air conditioning, so we could acquire loan exhibits from the Smithsonian." By providing these controls and requirements for such measures as security, safety and entrances, the Society can share important traveling exhibits with Barrington's residents, students and visitors.

As a result, the Society has presented three exhibits from the Smithsonian and three from the National Endowment for the Humanities to Barrington over the past three years, including the NEH "Heroes of the Sky: Adventures in Early Flight." During the show, students from Barrington High School assisted the Society by serving as docents and monitoring the exhibit.

"Documenting China: Contemporary Photography and Social Change," featuring "the dramatic works of seven Chinese photographers ... unveiling the truth about China's internal struggle—a battle between modern industrialism and the traditional, agrarian past that has sustained the country for thousands of years," according to the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, will be an ongoing display until the end of the year. Harkin said that two NEH exhibits will follow, one focusing on 19th century farm women and the other on Native American Midwestern garb.

In addition to exhibits and tours of its facilities, Society volunteers collect oral histories, support the community's architectural integrity and respond to requests to view archival materials, especially photos.

"We're a volunteer organization yet very professional," Harkin said. "We encourage people to join and volunteers to come forward," he added. Those interested in supporting the Society's work in these ways are encouraged to contact the organization by calling 847-381-1730. ■